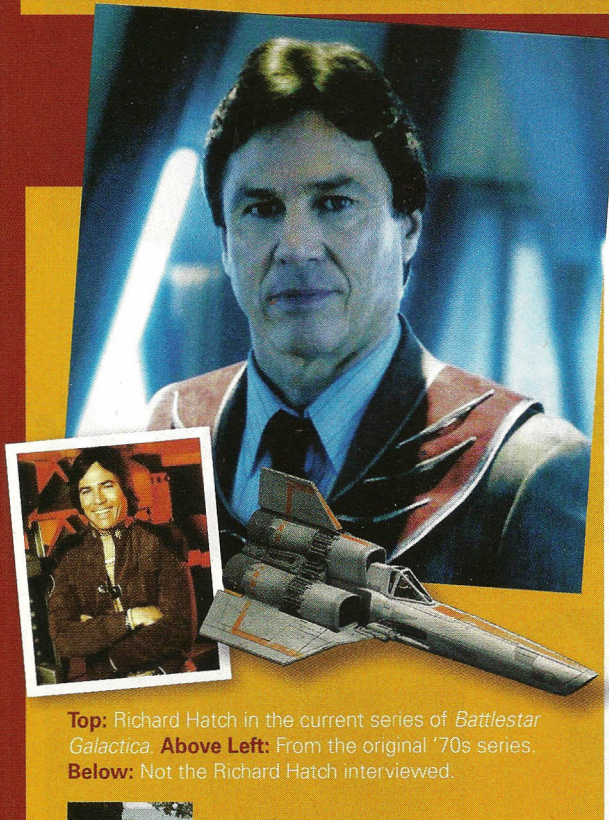


# WHO THE FRAK AM I?



Two time *Battlestar Galactica* star **Richard Hatch** talks Cylons and identity crisis.



**Top:** Richard Hatch in the current series of *Battlestar Galactica*. **Above Left:** From the original '70s series. **Below:** Not the Richard Hatch interviewed.



The advent of reality television proved something of a crucible for actor Richard Hatch, best known as Apollo from the 1980's mega hit sci-fi series *Battlestar Galactica*. In 2001, after someone with an identical name won a million dollars – and infamy – on the first season of reality TV show *Survivor*, Hatch found himself with a decidedly hazy public image. The problem worsened after the eponymous reality star was jailed for tax evasion in 2006

"I can't tell you how difficult that was," Hatch says of the experience. "There were people who thought that might be me. They were thinking, 'my God, Richard, what did you do?'"

A Google search for Richard Hatch, the name formerly

synonymous with the career actor and star of the futuristic sci-fi holocaust series which had attracted 65 million viewers on debut almost 30 years ago, remains a confusing proposition; even after Hatch's considerable recent success in the two time Emmy winning re-imagining of *Battlestar*, whose final season is out on DVD this month.

"To this day if you go online it mixes his pictures with my pictures, and if you didn't know you could be thinking it's just an older or younger version of the same guy," says Hatch.

Fortunately this collision between reality and fiction based television mostly sees him come out on top in the internet search stakes. Chalk this down to his work on TV classics like *Dynasty*, *Hawaii Five-O* and *The Hatfields and the McCoy's*, and his role on the new *Galactica*.

"It's a big surprise," Hatch says of his continued involvement with the *Galactica* franchise as Tom Zarek – the series' dark "Nelson Mandela character" as he puts it. "I was obviously involved in the original, and I was asked to write the novels, and the comic books for extreme press," Hatch says. "But when you have a story that's political, sociological and says something about the human condition like we had over five years (the new *Battlestar* series wrapped earlier this year), it's like a dream come true."

Not that Hatch's relationship with *Galactica* Mark II was such a flowery affair from the outset. "There was cold ice in the room after I saw some of the early trailers," Hatch admits. "It

was so different. They'd changed it so much it was hard to look at objectively – Starbuck (originally played by '80s TV staple Dirk Benedict) was a woman."

But new series writer and producer Ron Moore managed to sway Hatch with storylines that had "the original core *Battlestar* feel," Hatch says. "Knowing Ron's vision, I knew it was going to be something more than just entertainment – it had a lot to say to the world post 9/11. So I said yes, if it could be a win-win situation I would love to be involved."

With Moore at the helm, Universal allowed *Battlestar Galactica* the freedom to explore stories related to the life and death experience of surviving a holocaust, something that Hatch felt was absent from the original series.

"30 years ago they left us in the middle ground, because the networks and studios were afraid of sci-fi in general, and more afraid of alienating the audience. This time we were able to go into more powerful core story directions."

Even allowing for the eccentric and often controversial proclivities of Hatch's most recent *Battlestar* cast mates – one of whom has frequent sexual liaisons and dialogue with a Cylon only he can see, Hatch is in no doubt as to who the most 'out there' actor he's worked with.

"Jack Palance is one of the most uniquely charismatic, different, quirky off the wall guys to have lived," Hatch says. If anyone is intimidating it was Jack Palance, but underneath that was a warmth and good hearted man."